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USS HERSHEL “WOODY” WILLIAMS (ESB 4)

Honoring a U.S. Marine Corps Hero



Hershel “Woody” Williams’ Service

- Hershel Woodrow Williams was born October 2, 1923 in Quiet Dell, West Virginia.
- He enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in May 1943 and attended recruit training at San Diego, California.
- Corporal Williams was a demolitions sergeant during the Battle for Iwo Jima. On February 23, 1945, when American tanks were held up by Japanese guns, minefields, and rough island terrain, Williams advanced alone and, in a four-hour effort while under terrific fire, utilized demolition charges and flame throwers to annihilate many enemy positions, thus enabling his company to reach its objective.
- On October 5, 1945, President Harry S. Truman presented Corporal Williams with the Medal of Honor for his “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life.”
- Discharged from active duty in November 1945, Williams reenlisted in the inactive Marine Corps Reserve in March 1948, serving until August 1949.
- He again joined the Marine Corps Reserve in October 1954, serving with units based in West Virginia and attaining the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4 before retiring in 1969.

ESB 4 Quick Facts:

Name: USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4)

Class: Expeditionary Sea Base

Length: 784 feet

Beam: 164 feet

Displacement: 90,000 tons

Speed: 15 knots

Crew: 5 Officers, 96 Enlisted, 44 Civilian Mariners

Mission: As a U.S. Navy warship, ESB 4 can conduct potential mine-countermeasure operations and provide special operations forces staging. It’s designed around four capabilities: Aviation, Berthing, Equipment Staging Area, Command and Control



The Ship’s Crest

A crest is used to identify a ship and its elements usually symbolize the ship’s namesake. For USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4), the elements represent the heroic service of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Hershel “Woody” Williams and the features of the Expeditionary Sea Base class.

- The principle charge is a gold chevron fractured and dislocated upward to symbolize the breakthrough of the Iwo Jima beachhead.
- Hershel Williams’ heroism is embodied in the ancient heraldic charge of a gold salamander, thought in medieval times to be capable of breathing fire.
- The collar and the shield’s chief display ribbon of the Medal of Honor, awarded to Williams for his exceptional valor on the island of Iwo Jima in World War II.
- The palm fronds recall the Pacific Theater. Mount Suribachi was the primary conquest on Iwo Jima, and the location where Williams’ courage and fearless actions resulted in President Truman awarding him the Medal of Honor.



“Peace we seek, Peace we keep”